

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2654

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ELAB, XI, XF, MO

SUBJ: MOROCCAN-LIBYAN CONFRONTATION AT ARAB LABOR OFFICE
CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: LIBYAN TRADE UNION DELEGATE TO ARAB LABOR OFFICE CONFERENCE IN RABAT PROVIDED ONLY SOUR NOTE FOR MEETING BY ACCUSING MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT OF VIOLATING TRADE UNION LIBERTIES. MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATE RESPONDED IN KIND, DEFENDING GOM'S RECORD WHILE ACCUSING LIBYANS OF THEMSELVES DENYING TRADE UNION RIGHTS. LIBYAN IRE DUE TO IMPRISONMENT A FEW MOROCCAN TRADE UNIONISTS FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN VARIOUS ANTI-REGIME PLOTS. WHILE GOM HAS ALLOWED MORE TRADE UNION FREEDOM THAN A GOOD MANY ARAB STATES, ITS SINS ARE NUMEROUS ENOUGH TO GIVE SOME VALIDITY TO LIBYAN CHARGES. LIBYAN POSITION FORCED UNION MAROCAINE DU TRAVAIL (UMT), THOROUGHLY ANGERED AT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOM, TO MAKE SHORT STATEMENT IN DEFENSE TRADE UNION LIBERTIES. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBYAN TRADE UNION DELEGATE
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REFERENCE IN RABAT PROVIDED ONLY SOUR NOTE FOR CONFERENCE

EARLY LAST WEEK BY GIVING SPEECH IN WHICH HE ACCUSED GOM OF WHOLESALE VIOLATIONS OF TRADE UNION LIBERTIES, INCLUDING ARRESTS AND DETENTION TRADE UNIONISTS.

3. HEAD OF MOROCCAN DELEGATION (AND OFFICIAL OF LABOR MINISTRY) JBDELLATIF KHALES SPOKE IN REPLY MARCH 10. KHALES SAID THAT ALTHOUGH MEETING HAD "HOPED AVOID THIS KIND FUTILE EXERCISE," LIBYAN ACCUSATIONS WERE "HARMFUL, AGGRESIVE AND ILL-INTENTIONED."

4. KHALES SAID MOROCCAN TRADE UNIONS ENJOY FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE GUARANTEED BY CONSTITUTION AND THAT GOM DOES NOT INTERFERE IN UNION ELECTION. IN LIBYA, HE ADDED, UNIONS ARE STRICTLY CONTROLLED BY LABOR MINISTRY AND CANNOT EVEN HOLD MEETINGS WITHOUT GOVERNMENT PERMISSION.

5. ON SUBJECT INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATIONS, KHALSS SAID MOROCCAN UNIONS FREE TO DEAL WITH FOREIGN UNIONS AND INTERNATIONAL FEDERATIONS WHILE LIBYAN UNIONS STRICTLY ENJOINED FROM FOREIGN CONTACTS.

6. REPLYING TO LIBYAN CLAIM THAT GOM HAS VIOLATED TRADE UNION RIGHTS BY ARRESTING TRADE UNIONISTS, KHALES CHALLENGED LIBYANS PROVIDE GOM WITH LIST OF THOSE ARRESTED AND SAID "WE DECLARE OFFICIALLY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE THAT THERE DOES NOT EXIST IN MOROCCAN PRISONS A SINGLE TRADE UNIONIST DETAINED FOR HIS IDEAS OR FOR HIS TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES IN DEFENDING HIS PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS. THANK GOD THAT MOROCCAN LAW AND THE MOROCCAN WORKING CLASS KNOW HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A REAL TRADE UNIONIST AND A PROFESSIONAL CRIMINAL." "ALL MOROCCANS, INCLUDING THE WORKING CLASS, STRONGLY CONDEMN THE MISDEEDS OF ANY TRAITOR PLOTTING AGAINST THE SECURITY OF HIS COUNTRY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS WITH CONNIVANCE FROM OUTSIDE.

7. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE GIVEN MUCH PLAY TO KHALES' REJOINDER.

8. COMMENT: LIBYAN ACCUSATION OF ARRESTS AND MOROCCAN REFERENCE TO "PLOTTING WITH CONNIVANCE FROM OUTSIDE" REFDR
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TO SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS (MOST NOTABLY OMAR BENJELLOUN) WITH TENUOUS TIES TO UMT DETAINED IN CONNECTION VARIOUS ANTI-REGIME PLOTS ALLEGEDLY SPONSORED BY LIBYANS. LIBYAN ACCUSATIONS ARE NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION, HOWEVER. WHILE TRADE UNIONISM IN MOROCCO ENJOYS RELATIVE FREEDOM WHEN COMPARED WITH MANY OTHER ARAB STATES, GOM DOES INDEED HAVE HABIT OF BREAKING ANNOYING STRIKES BY SIMPLY THROWING STRIKE LEADERS IN JAIL FOR A FEW DAYS. UMT HAS LEARNED TO LIVE WITH THIS

PRACTICE AS UNPLEASANT FACT OF LIFE, HOWEVER, AND MAINTAINS
DELICATE MODUS VIVENDI WITH MOROCCAN REGIME. UMT WAS ABLE
SUPPRESS ANTI-GOM AGITATION BY LIBYANS AT RECENT ICATU CONFERENCE,
BUT IS ANGERED AND EMBARRASSED BY LIBYAN BEHAVIOR AT ALO.
UMT, ITS HAND FORCED BY LIBYANS, FELT ITSELF OBLIGED MAKE
SHORT STATEMENT SAYING "EXISTENCE OF LAWS ON TRADE UNION LIBERTIES
(IN MOROCCO) DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT THESE LAWS ARE ENFORCED."
WE UNDERSTAND LIBYAN BELLIGERENCE NOT AT ALL WELL RECEIVED
BY OTHER DELEGATIONS AND THAT LIBYANS ARE NOW AS ISOLATED
ON TRADE UNION FRONT AS ELSEWHERE.
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